

The DAY OF DAYS

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

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April 30 Days
14

"But why didn't you come up?"
"Well, you see, I met a man outside I wanted to talk to for a moment, so I left her at the door."
"Well, it's waiting. Run on up. I won't be five minutes. And knock on Molly's door and see what the matter is."
"All right," returned P. Sybarite contentedly.

CHAPTER IV. Wheels of Chance.

HIS constructive mendacity light upon his conscience, P. Sybarite permitted George time enough to leave the house and gain Clancy's, then quietly followed as far as the gate, from which point he cut across the southern sidewalk, turned west to Ninth avenue and then north to Forty-second street. Here he boarded a cross-town car.

This was quite the most insane freak in which he had indulged himself these many years, and, frankly admitting this much, he was rather pleased than otherwise. He was bound to call on Bailey Penfield and inform that gentleman where he might find his hat. Incidentally he hoped to surprise something or other informing with regard to the fortunes of Miss Lesing.

Alighting at Sixth avenue, he walked to Forty-fifth street, turned off toward Fifth avenue and in another moment was at a standstill in the extreme bewilderment before No. 97.

By every normal indication the house was closed and untenable. From roof to basement its every window was blind with shades close drawn. The front doors were closed, the basement grating likewise.

Disappointed in the conviction that he had drawn a false lead, the little man strode on toward a little distance, then, on sheer impulse, gave up his project and, swinging about, started to go home.

But now as he approached No. 97 the second time a taxicab turned in from Sixth avenue and slid to the curb before that dwelling and set down a smallish young man dressed in the extreme of fashion, who, negligently handing a bill to the chauffeur, ran nimbly up the steps, rang the doorbell and, promptly letting himself into the dark vestibule, closed the door behind him.

The taxicab swung round and disappeared. Not so P. Sybarite. Profoundly intrigued, he waited hopefully for this second midnight caller to reappear, as baffled as himself. But, though he dawdled away a patient five minutes, nothing of the sort occurred.

Here was mystery within mystery indeed! Why P. Sybarite asked himself with impatience need he remain outside when another entered the house without let or hindrance?

Upon this thought he turned boldly up the steps, pressed the bell button, laid hold of the doorknob and entered into a vestibule as dark as his bewilderment and as empty as the palm of his hand, proving that the young gentleman of fashion had experienced no difficulty in penetrating farther into

answer. The man drew back and made as if to shut the grill.
"Nonsense!" P. Sybarite insisted sharply. "I have the card with this number. Got it from him only to-night."

"Card?" The face returned to the grill.
P. Sybarite made no bones about displaying his alleged credential.

"I believe you'll find that authentic," he observed with asperity.

By way of answer the grill closed with a snap. But his inclination to kick the door was nullified when without further delay it opened to admit him. Noise in air, he strouted in, and the door banged behind him.

He stood in the main hall of an old fashioned residence. To his right a double doorway revealed a drawing room luxuriously furnished, but, as far as he could determine, quite untenanted.

On the left a long staircase hugged the wall, with a glow of warm light at its head. To the rear the hall ended in a single doorway, through which he could see a handsome mahogany buffet, elaborately arranged with shimmering damask, silver and crystal.

"It's all right," announced the warder of the grill, his suspicions to all seeming completely allayed. "Mr. Penfield isn't in just at present, but—here he grinned shrewdly—"I reckon you ain't so dead set on seeing him as you made out. Will you go right on up, or would you like a bite of something to eat first?"

At the mere hint of food a frightful pang of hunger transfixed P. Sybarite. Abandoning false pride, P. Sybarite yielded.

"I don't mind if I do, thank you," "Straight on back; Pete'll take care of you all right."

A thumb indicated the door in the rear of the hall. P. Sybarite found the back room one of good proportions, whatever the architect's original intention, now serving as a combined lounge and grill; richly and comfortably furnished in sober, masculine fashion, boasting in all three buffers set forth with a lavish display of food and drink. In one of many deeply upholstered club chairs a gentleman of mature years and heavy body, with a scarlet face and a crumpled, wine stained shirt bosom, was slumbering serenely; two-thirds of an extravagant cigar cold between his fingers. In others two young men were confabulating quietly, but with a most disreputable air, heads together over a bridge of glasses. At a corner service table a negro in a white jacket was busy with a silver chafing dish, which exhaled a tantalizing aroma.

The negro, at the entrance of P. Sybarite, glanced quickly over his shoulder, and, seeing a strange face, clasped the cover on the chafing dish.
"Xan-suh-coin!" he gabbled. "It's sho' a pleasure to see yo' again."

"At least," suggested P. Sybarite, dropping into a chair, "it will be next time."
"That's right, suh—that's the troot!" The negro placed a small table adjacent to his elbow. "Tha's what Ah allus says to strange gentlemen fast time they comes hyeh, suh; makes 'em feel more at home like. Jus' lemme know what Ah kin do for yo' tonight. That 'ere lobstuh Newburg's jus' about prime fo' eatin' this very minute, ef yo' feel a bit peckish."

"I do," P. Sybarite admitted. "Just a spoonful!"
"Ah' uh! Ah' drink, suh? Jus' one Ah' innocent cocktail to fix yo' mood right?"

"If you insist, Pete—if you insist." "Yas-suh; and wif the lobstuh, suh. Ah' venture to suggest a nice, cold Ah' bit of champagne?"

The negro waddled away, returned and offered the guest a glass brimming with amber tinted liquid.

Tender morsels of lobster smothered in cream and sherry, piping hot; daintiest possible wafers of bread and butter embracing leaves of pale lettuce; a hollow steamed glass effervescent with liquid sunlight of a most excellent bouquet—and then another; these served not in the least to subdue P. Sybarite's internal jubilation.

Finally "the house," insisted that he top off with a cigar.

Ten years since his teeth had gripped a Fancy Tale of Smoke!

Now, it mustn't be understood that P. Sybarite entertained any misapprehensions as to the nature of the attention into which he had stumbled. He had not needed the sound, sometimes in quieter moments audible from upstairs, of a prolonged whirr, ending in several staccato clicks, to make him shrewdly cognizant of its questionable character.

So at length, satiate and a little weary—drawn by curiosity besides—be rose, endowed Pete lavishly with a handful of small change, something over 50 cents—all he had in the world aside from his cherished \$5—and slowly ascended to the second floor.

Here in remodeling the house for its present purposes partitions had arbitrarily been dispensed with. Aside

Women Worth While



MRS. MORRIS SHEPPARD.

By Selene Armstrong Harmon.

The woman in public life who remains enthusiastic and unwearied throughout a Washington season, with its round of official and private entertaining, is rare. The woman who not only accomplishes this feat, but who finds time to read with her husband the good old books that a certain Mr. Dickens, a Mr. Thackeray and other gentlemen of their time used to write is a paragon. She has achieved both poise and a sense of leisure.

"My husband and I," says Mrs. Sheppard, "are fond of society, but we do not allow it to interfere with our favorite recreation, that of reading together. I don't know just how we accomplish it, but we do find time to enjoy together a great many of those standard books which are so much more enjoyable when read aloud than when read to oneself. Did it ever occur to you how few modern stories there are that stand the test of being read aloud. One usually takes the latest book, races through it on a rainy day and forgets it by the time the sun shines again. But the old books and the rare books are mellow, and companionable, and leisurely. I can recommend them as an antidote for those conditions in the life of the modern woman that make for restlessness, nervousness and discontent."

Mrs. Sheppard is one of the youngest women in congressional circles at the capital. Before her marriage she was Miss Lucile Henderson of Texarkana, Texas. She had known for years the man whose name she was to bear, but their romance did not begin in Texarkana, where both lived. It began in Washington, when Senator Sheppard was in the lower house of congress and when Mrs. Sheppard was attending a fashionable finishing school at the capital. They have now been married four years. They have a charming young daughter of three.

"To the mother of any child," Mrs. Sheppard says, "that child is the one absorbing interest, coming before books, society, taste or hobbies of any sort. And motherhood means a liberal education to the average woman. However superficial she may have been before, she now becomes 'dead in earnest,' as we say, with regard to everything that affects or touches the life of her child, from the cutting of a tooth to the choosing of a college course."

Mrs. Sheppard supervises closely the care and training of her little daughter. That the child, however, is not her only absorbing interest is evidenced when one asks if she is politically ambitious for her husband. Her face lights up as she says:
"I am and always have been. I am proud of what he has accomplished at a comparatively early age in politics. But apart from this, and more than this, I am proud of what he has accomplished as a man."

With a nod. His heart stopped beating. Five dollars! All he had in the world.

The whirr of the deadly little ball in its ebony runway was like nothing less than the exultant shriek of a banshee.

"Three, red!" the croupier began his chant.

P. Sybarite failed to hear the rest. The croupier tossed him a chocolate token. He was conscious that he touched it with numb and witless fingers, mechanically pushing it upon the red diamond.

Ensnared another awful, soul sickening minute of suspense.

"Twenty-five, red!"

A second brown chip appeared magically on top of the first. P. Sybarite regarded them stupidly. Afraid to touch them, his brain communicated to his hand the impulse to remove the chips ere it was too late, but the hand hung motionless in listless mutiny.

"Thirty-four, red!"

Two more chips were added to his stack.

And this time his brain sulked. If his body wouldn't heed his pain and sagacious admonition—very well! It just wouldn't bother itself to signal any further advice.

But quite instinctively his hand moved out, tenderly embraced the four brown chips and transferred them to the green area dominated by the black diamond.

Forty dollars was represented by that stunted pillar of brown wafers! P. Sybarite experienced an effect of coming to his senses after an abbreviated and, to tell the truth, somewhat nightmarish nap. Apathy the manner of one or two other players whom he had observed before this madness possessed him, he thrust the chips out of the charmed circle of chance and nodded again (with what a reasoned air to the croupier).

"Cash or chips?" inquired that functionary.

"Oh, cash, thank you."

The chips gathered into the company of their brethren. Two twenty dollar bills replaced them.

Stifling these last into his pocket, P. Sybarite turned and stroled indifferently toward the door.

"Better get away before it's too late," intelligence counseled.

"Right you are," he admitted faintly. "I'll go home now before anybody takes this away from me."

"Sensible of you," intelligence approved.

"Still," suggested the small, but clear voice of greed before he could gain the head of the stairs, "you've got your original \$5 yet to lose. Be a sport. Don't go away without turning in a

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